

#old is beautiful



WINTON

Older Wintonians share wisdom on beauty
and ageing in outback Queensland

Acknowledgement

We acknowledge the Koa people,
Traditional Owners of the Winton region.
We recognise their continuing connection
to land, waters and culture.

We pay our respects to Elders
past, present and emerging.

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Project partners

The Old is Beautiful, Winton project was hosted by ADA Australia, in partnership with the Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN) and facilitated by Celebrate Ageing Ltd.

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The #OldisBeautiful, Winton project is one of four hosted across Queensland by ADA Australia in 2025. The #OldisBeautiful project is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd.

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More info on #OldisBeautiful

ADA project page: <https://adaaustralia.com.au/old-is-beautiful/>

National page: <https://www.celebrateageing.com/beautiful.html>

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Forewords

Geoff Rowe

CEO ADA Australia

The World Health Organisation recognises ageism as a significant global issue. Ageism can erode older people's self-confidence, health and wellbeing, destroy families and communities and place significant burden on health services and the economy. Ageism also drives the elder abuse experienced by around 150,000 older people in Queensland every year. Most of this abuse occurs in families and is predominately psychological, physical and financial abuse.

We must build respect for older people at every level of society, including families. We need to build cultural beliefs and practices that value older people and build connections between older people and those who are not yet old. This significant task requires innovative strategies, one of which is the Old is Beautiful project.

We partnered with Celebrate Ageing Ltd to roll out the Old is Beautiful project in Queensland. The project involves workshops to build older people's knowledge of ageism, elder abuse and services that can assist them. Professional portraits are taken and participants document messages about what beautiful means to them, and what makes them beautiful. This process seeks to empower older people to determine their own value in an 'anti-ageing' world.

We also ask workshop participants to share a body positive message for a younger person, and we will invite younger people to respond. This intergenerational aspect of the project responds to older people's concerns about the body image issues experienced by their grandchildren. We want to remind older people they have the power to be body positive influencers for their peers, and for younger people.

Project workshops were hosted in Brisbane, Mount Glorious, Cairns and Winton. The inclusion of an outback community was a priority for ADA Australia. We recognise the diversity of Queensland geography and groups, and we are committed to reaching out to every older Queenslanders who needs our support. We also embrace the opportunity to learn from older people, about their lives and their needs.

The stories shared in this resource show us a positive ageing role model and a community that values older people can improve the experience of ageing. We have much to learn from this.



Geoff Rowe
CEO ADA Australia

Sandy Gillies

CEO Western Qld Primary Health Network

Western Queensland is one of Australia's most remote and expansive regions, home to over 64,000 people spread across nearly one million square kilometres. Winton is a town of 1,129 people, located 1,353 kms from Brisbane on the lands of the Koa People.

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN)¹ was established to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of primary care services for people living in Western Queensland, particularly those at risk of poor health outcomes. We want to ensure every person, every community, no matter how remote, has the same opportunities for good health and wellbeing. Yet, in our region, healthcare access can still depend on your postcode.

The number of older residents in Winton is growing faster than the average across Queensland and Australia.² There were 325 older people in 2021, compared with 254 a decade earlier. By percentage, older people made up 26.6% of the Winton Shire in 2016 and 33.7% in 2021.

In 2024 we launched our Ageing in the Outback Strategy.³ Our vision is for all older persons in Western Queensland to have access to informed, evidence-based healthcare services to support personal decision making and opportunities to optimise wellbeing. The Strategy includes plans to improve social inclusion such as community-based interventions and services that focus on building social connections can alleviate loneliness and improve mental health.

We want to encourage older people to participate in activities that improve their physical wellbeing, strength and social connection. I read with interest the stories about 60 and Better Program and how much it meant to participants. I understand that for older people to have a 90 year old instructor opened up the possibilities for more positive role models.

As part of our Strategy, we also want to create supportive environments that address ageism and protect against elder abuse. It is encouraging to read that older people feel valued in the Winton community and that this helps them to feel more positive about their age. It is also very interesting that this seems to correlate with a lower gap between their subjective and biological age, compared with metro counterparts. These understandings of 'what works' are valuable tools for achieving our vision to optimise the wellbeing of our older people.

The focus on #OldisBeautiful is novel and led to important conversations with older people about their value. The approach, to work directly with older people is an important one. Older people are the true experts in their lives, and their voices must be at the centre of everything we do.

Thank you to ADA Australia and Celebrate Ageing Ltd for the opportunity to work together on this innovative approach to exploring ageism in the Outback.



Sandy Gillies
CEO, WQPHN

¹ <https://www.wqphn.com.au/>

² <https://www.winton.qld.gov.au/wise-well-winton>

³ <https://www.wqphn.com.au/our-phn/publications-and-reports>

John Elliott

Photographer

In my life I've driven hundreds of thousands of miles. I've met thousands of people along the way and heard their stories. The road has been long.

None of these pictures are meant to be the perfect picture. If you're looking for that, you're in the wrong place. It's about what I've learned from the mess, from the clutter, from those moments when the photographs were the only things that made sense, when everything else felt like noise.

A photograph is just a frame around a piece of time. You look at it long enough, you might start to see something else, something underneath. That's what I'm hoping for. That's what this whole thing is about.

I was delighted when Celebrate Ageing approached me to photograph a bunch of older people in Winton. I pride myself in being able to get close to people, getting people to trust me. Often the photos are taken on the first meeting, so this portrait job was very different. I knew most of the people I photographed, and I knew them well over many years.

My portraits have changed over the years. When I was younger, my portraits included lots of other stuff; backgrounds, where they lived and what they wore. As I became older and (hopefully) wiser I realised that this wasn't who they were; so, I moved in closer and most of my portraits now try to record what is going on behind their eyes, a glimpse into their soul. I've tried to remove the barrier between subject and viewer, almost as if the camera doesn't exist.

I hope my portraits of Winton locals help you get to know them and better understand who they are. Out here in western Queensland they are a tough, uncompromising bunch of people. They are also, warm, wise and loving and they never take a backward step.

I'm a lucky man. I get to photograph people who I love and respect.

Just another thought on photography, great portraits don't have a lot to do with photography, more to do with the 'chat'.

John Elliott

John Elliott

"John Elliott is a remarkable photographer. John has the capacity to get close to people – there is a repeated motif in these photographs –his approach and technical skill - but he doesn't come between us and the subject – he invites us into a one-to-one encounter.

This is the beginning of all great portraiture."

Andrew Sayers, former Director of The National Portrait Gallery

"John Elliott is a storyteller. He travels widely and likes people, especially those without self-importance and bombast. He has seldom been bothered with unmasking pretence let alone depicting it and gathers trust easily. Weather portraits of Aboriginal friends or the people at a country music festival, rural workers or the urban tattooed punks, it's always John Elliott's empathy and interest which holds our attention no matter how quietly measured, or capriciously impulsive certain images may appear.

Doug Hall, former Director, Queensland Art Gallery



Roslyn Blacket

Winton is situated in the heart of central western Queensland, also known as the Outback. The population of the Shire of Winton is roughly around 1300, for both town and rural areas combined and small enough for anyone to become acquainted with almost everyone. Most residents of Winton are supportive of one another. This gives each one of us a sense of security in the knowledge that someone has our back in times of need.

Winton is a very peaceful and safe place in which to live, and its people are friendly. Personally, I find that the wider community is very respectful of its elderly. Older people of Winton serve alongside others in a voluntary capacity. As members of various committees for events and charities, this blend of ages provides a valuable understanding between generations and develops respect for each other's opinions. All age groups have much to offer each other in wisdom and experience.

Winton Shire Council is responsible for the many services that are available to the senior population. Some older residents have family living nearby, who attend to their needs. Those with family living afar, are provided with vital services from the Neighbourhood Centre. The *60 and Better* program organise varied forms of activities during each week. Exercise classes take place regularly, to assist in keeping the elderly moving. Winton has two medical practitioners and a hospital. A bus or car is available to take the elderly or disabled to Longreach for further medical treatment if necessary.

My husband and I spent fifty-two years on the land in the Winton and Boulia areas. We bred and raised cattle. Being on property is why I am strong. I got all the exercise in the world. It was constant. When it was mustering time, I had to get up at 4am to cook breakfast for the workers, and then there was branding and counting cattle and sending them to market. The day would finish around 10 pm. We would work seven days a week, every day of the year, except when we went on holidays. The cows never shut down, so we had to keep going.

Following my husband's passing, eight years ago, I decided that it was time for me to retire in town, the obvious choice being Winton. After all, having patronised businesses there and being part of committees for fifty years, we came to know and associate with a lot of its residents. We already owned a house, so the transition was an easy one.

Living and working on the land was a wonderful experience, but I knew that a time would arrive when I needed to sign off on this chapter of my life. I had reached my seventies, and it was only a matter of time, before I became limited in what I could do. I still miss the land, but I am able to accept change gracefully. As the saying goes, "let's celebrate ageing as beautiful" in a positive fashion and be thankful for the gift of longevity.

For me, beautiful is not about physical beauty – that is fleeting. We need to be thankful for the gift of longevity. Lots of people do not get to possess that gift.

We need to appreciate the present. Time is short.

Loving ourselves as we are and not mourning the loss of our youth is important. The appearance of a person is not as important as what comes from a person's heart. We need to celebrate the wisdom gathered along life's journey and ignore the negativity of others.

Self-satisfaction comes from treating others, whom we meet each day, with love, compassion and kindness - knowing that each will benefit positively from our actions.

That is what ageing beautifully means to me.

My response to a younger person who was feeling bad about their body and themselves would firstly be to find a safe place for us to talk and to feel comfortable in. I would try to win their confidence by making them feel that I care. I would not be judgmental in any way, and I would reassure them that the information they impart to me will be kept confidential.

Once I earned their trust, I would gently ask them, if they feel comfortable, to tell me their story. If they consent, I would try to pick up on key points of what they are saying and replay it to them. In this way, I can dig deeper into how they think about their lives. I would emphasize how positive thinking, can bring about change and self-confidence.

A few suggestions for the younger person to ponder. We have not been born to waste precious time worrying about our perceived imperfections. Life can be short. Do not allow other imperfect humans to set the standards on how others are supposed to look. You are the sole manager of your lives. Set a goal for your life. Your decisions will determine your outcomes. Be thankful for being alive and love who you are. A beautiful, loving and compassionate heart is a greater asset than physical beauty. Set a goal to stand out from the rest. Become leaders and not necessarily followers.

Make a point of taking time to view nature at its finest and rest in its peace. The butterflies and the birds of colour have beauty, but other insects and birds are plain. That is how it is in our world. Try to accept that it is what it is. It cannot change. Make the most of what you are gifted with.

I would then tell them stories of the bygone eras in Australia, where boys around sixteen would lie about their ages to enable them to join the army to fight overseas for the freedom of their country. In their minds, body image did not matter; freedom, being courageous and serving their country was their main goal.

Humans are not meant to be perfect in any way. Some may appear to be physically attractive to the human eye, perhaps what we would term as beautiful, but their hearts may not be in the right place. How we view and treat anyone we meet each day, is a testament to our true character. Think of those who return from battle with horrific injuries. Instead of concentrating on their appearance, we need to celebrate and respect their courage in risking their lives for their country. When we choose to dwell on ourselves and our perceived imperfections and compare it with those of the soldier, our concerns about image should fade into insignificance.

I would leave these points of view with my interviewees and invite them to keep in touch. I would reassure them of ongoing support, if necessary.



Rainie Gillies

I've lived in the same house in Winton all my life. It was my parents' house. I used to go fruit picking in Shepparton, and I worked in Brisbane and Bundaberg, but once I got the taste of bore water in my mouth, I had to keep coming back. Bore water smells a bit and most people don't like it - but I like it when it's cold and I'm thirsty.

Sometimes people ask me if I'm lonely. It's never lonely. There is always someone here. At 10am every day I put the kettle on, and people just arrive, the fellas and all.

There is a lot of mateship around here, especially the ones our age. Everyone knows everyone's business. When the chips are down, people are there to help you. You wouldn't get that in Brisbane. People just come and help. How nice! If something happens, people straight away are there for you.

We look out for each other. There is an old fella that lives in the next street and if I get up and his light isn't on, or his door is closed, I'll ring someone to go and check on him. We do that for each other. It's very reassuring.

Most of us here have got personal alarms, if you fall you just press a button, and someone comes. I use a wheely walker, and I have a car. There's a lot of people that have scooters, because they need help to get around and there is no public transport. You can be independent if you've got a scooter. The scooters are so easy to use, but there are some wild ones using them. The good thing is everyone knows them and so we get out of their way. Sometimes the tourists aren't happy with them though.

There's lots for us to do in town. There is a men's shed, my husband was one of the founding members. There is also *60 and Better*, which has classes, and it has bought people out of their homes. In older times, people would just sit at home. Some people who didn't get out before now, come out of their homes. Now they go to every dog fight in town. You have got to get out and have a go.

I don't go much to *60 and Better*, but I have a few old friends in the hospital and if I'm visiting them and Stephanie sees me, she'll pull me into her exercise class. She runs the exercise classes at the hospital.

I can't do a lot of things at the moment. But when I get my knee done, I will be ready to go again. All my life I have been at everything. I have been active volunteering and there are always people staying here. Most people are active and doing a lot of volunteering. It helps them age well. My friend Loretta is older than me and she is in everything. She doesn't muck around. She doesn't say she can't be bothered. She just gets in, and she is the lady who "does".

I'm 78 and I feel 78. I'm good from the waist up. The only problem with me is my legs. I still get up at 5am and do what I need to do. Sometimes I feel 108, but mostly I feel 78. Ageing in Winton is not a bad thing.

People are always ready to help. If I go into the shops, I can order whatever I want, and they will bring it out. Sometimes I ring and tell people what I need, and they will drop it off. People here will do anything for you.

I don't think it's the same in the city. People don't know each other, and they are too frightened to help. The young people here look after you. They can be the wildest young fellows, but they will look out for you. Sometimes when I need some help, I will go into town to find a young fellow to help me. When I see boys at the supermarket, I get them to clean my windscreen because I can't reach across it. They can be wild, but they will help.

My family are respectful; they give me things when I need it. Anything I want they will give to me. I haven't had much in my life and can't afford much - but I don't need much. My family all want to help when I need help, and sometimes when I don't.

Things are tough if you make it tough. Sometimes God helps those who help themselves.

In my heart I feel beautiful even if I don't look it. Sometimes I feel like the last rose of summer, but I feel good about myself. I don't care. If I want to go out somewhere, I'll just go. I mix with other people, and it does me the world of good. I grew up having nothing - but worked around it. You just can't sit there. You have to help yourself. Some people feel inferior and so they don't go out. You can't let that mindset hold you back.

You don't have to be a model to be beautiful. It's your heart. Beautiful is when you are contented, and you get up in the morning and you feel good. I'm no movie star beautiful, but I have a good mind, and I feel well for people. I try to help people if I can. Beautiful is who you are as a person. I'm all right. I can hold my own.

I know there are young people who look lovely, but they don't feel good about themselves. I want to say to young people who don't feel good about themselves or their bodies - nobody is perfect. Find someone you trust and tell them what you are feeling. Turn your back on the rot or poke your tongue at people who are being mean, or laugh at them and then move on. Put your nose in the air and know you are a good person.



Stephanie Greenwood

I arrived in Winton with my husband and three boys when I was in my thirties. We had been living in Rockhampton and my husband's employers kept sending him on jobs out of town. He didn't like this, so he decided to look for something else. He was an electrical linesman. Back in the sixties the Winton Shire Council ran its own powerhouse and generated its own electricity. And that's where we moved to.

We were only to come for a couple of years, but that was nearly 60 years ago. I was quite happy with Winton as it was at the time. It had two schools, a kindergarten, a hospital, doctor, a chemist, three or four grocery shops, butcher, bakery, men's and ladies wear shops. It was a bustling town that had everything a family needed.

We had one son in school and the second in kindergarten, a community-run kindy with a qualified teacher. The teacher occasionally called for mums to assist, and I would often go to help. I enjoyed it. Six months later I was employed as the kindy assistant. In the new school year, the committee was unable to employ a qualified teacher. I was kept on and so actually became the kindergarten teacher.

I did that until the government introduced free pre-schools. Parents then enrolled their young ones into the school system, where I was fortunate to be given employment as a teacher aide. By then I was a single mother of four boys. That was my role for the next 35 years, a wonderful job.

Because I was a teacher for so long, I know a lot of people in town. Having that connection is truly wonderful. There have been lots of newcomers, people come and go, but there are so many more locals who have passed through school under my gaze. There are grandmas in town who passed through my hands as students. There is a young woman in town who is CEO of a Qld government health organisation who likes introducing me to colleagues as 'my kindy teacher'. I think I am regarded as a local.

I officially retired from school at age 72 but was accepted as a volunteer by succeeding principals for the next few years. There was a place for me, and I was useful. When the Council established its gym around this time, I joined. I also decided to investigate the *60 and Better Program*, a senior citizen's group, established by the Council. I have always been involved in community organisations and committees, but not being in full time employment left some time on my hands.

Up at 'sixties' there were exercise sessions in place which involved watching a video and replicating the movements – okay, but we only had the one video. I'd had a little experience attending aerobics, Zumba, and other classes offered by different teachers over the years, so I asked if they'd like to try them. And that's how my fitness sessions started.

We do an hour-long class two mornings a week – a different program each day, swapping around. To me the music is important. I can't choreograph an exercise routine until the music is in my head. But being seniors, our classes are not aerobics, the music is just there in the background for stretching and mobility, and dumbbell lifts.

When I run a class, I talk my way through it. I like my people to be aware of what they're doing. I have been delivering these classes twice a week now for more than ten years at *60 & Better*. Older people need to know it's possible to be in your nineties and still working. They see me and know they can still keep going. We're here doing something – not just sitting around planning our funeral. Keeping mobile is important. So why are there only eight or so ladies taking part?

A year or more ago I had been regularly helping a friend in her nineties who had been given exercises by an exercise physiologist. She lived in the aged care part of our hospital. Soon after she died, the director of nursing asked me if I would consider continuing my exercise sessions with the other residents. So, I did.

I would say that ageing in Winton is sometimes busy and sometimes sees you with nothing to do. My feeling is you have to have a reason to get up every day. Once you have passed the stage of going to work every day, if you don't have a reason to get up, what's the point of just *being there*? You have to be a person with something to do. Ageing in Winton is defined by your own attitude.

Winton is a small place with fewer than a thousand people, and we are shrinking. Our community is shrinking. We used to have four grocery stores, now we only have two, and no butcher shop. There are no ladies' shops to go to. You have to travel to another town or get someone to shop online for you. It's all too frustrating.

Mention was made regarding employment opportunities. This obviously does not apply to an older age group. People do tend to keep in their job after the perceived 'retirement age'. There is a go-ahead young couple in Winton who call for staff from time to time: the position of 'barista' didn't exist in 'my' time.

One of my sons, who lives in Rockhampton, was talking at one time about a granny flat. I would not like to return to the city because you are really so much removed from people. Here in Winton, there is always someone who knows where you are. I didn't turn up to my gym session on two occasions and there were calls to find out where I was.

Once I didn't go to an appointment and the nurse phoned, then later came round and knocked on my door to check that I was okay. There is always someone who knows where you should be.

You mentioned that someone commented on my taste in music. Yes, it may be a bit odd, but I do like heavy metal music. I am a child of the fifties and there was always music then. There were always dances, this was in Rockhampton.

Fast forward to marriage and Winton in the early eighties. I helped to set up the first Winton Youth Centre as a drop-in place for the older kids after school and then introduced our first disco nights. I was the one who ordered in the music and acted as DJ. Yes, I did know my music, of course the students eventually took on that DJ role. We hung in there for another eighteen years but eventually could not muster enough volunteers as supervisors and that was that.

One of my boys had previously introduced me to heavy metal music and I learned about the beginnings with Black Sabbath and Judas Priest. Loved it, and as time went on, I moved on to the newer groups and gathered quite a collection. The person who may have mentioned this to you is quite amused at the idea and often introduces me to people by bringing up the subject.

I also had a volunteer role operating a book exchange, proceeds being shared between our two schools. Regrettably I had to close after fifty years in business. Do people no longer read? Or do they only read screens?

We're talking about ageing. The things I can no longer do easily involve housework. I can move and do my exercises, but I absolutely hate cleaning the bath. Mopping or polishing the floors is wearying and lifting the innerspring mattress to put on the fitted sheet is difficult, for me.

We are supposed to be able to access assistance through My Aged Care. Supposed to. But they are short staffed and so it's there on paper, but rarely available.

I can't relate to the statement that old is beautiful because unfortunately I relate the word beautiful to actual physical appearance. And though having a beautiful nature is admirable and loveable, it is not, to me, beautiful. I am sorry, you might be hoping for a different reaction.

I don't know that I am a role model. I have always believed in contributing to community projects and organisations by serving on committees that actually DO something. It's just that I am visible in these roles still and have been for so many years. I know that mums as well as dads are in the workforce to support their family, but a community needs support to thrive too.

And as for young people and their struggles with their body image – nothing wrong with that – they believe that beauty is important, so they're doing something about it. I would encourage them to think, in addition, about their well-being. I think most young people, men and women, join a gym or exercise class looking to improve their appearance. They are not looking to strengthen their bodies. It is more for appearance. It's important to think of their own well-being, having flexibility and moving freely within their body.



Stan Boge

I've been through a lot. Cancer. Stroke. And I have had my gall bladder taken out. I am a fighter. I came back. The community was beautiful; they backed us when I was sick.

Beautiful means a lot. I got Tracy, she's my partner. Got me dog, Truckie, who's a kelpie. I don't care how I look. People would say what makes me beautiful is I have a kind loving heart and I would help anyone, anytime.

To the young people who are having difficulty with their body image I would say, beauty is in the heart - just be who you are.



Delma Russell

I came from Blackall originally. Dad and mum bought a place out of town in 1964 and then there was a drought, so there was no feed for our stock. Dad was a drover, so we took to the road with cattle and sheep. I had to leave school when I was 14 to help on the property.

My jobs were to check water, fix things and go out mustering, which would take nearly all day. We had about 3000 sheep altogether. I mustered 400 to 600 at a time. I would walk them back past our house, down a road, into another paddock and then through a gate into our neighbour's paddock and shearing shed. After the sheep were shorn I walked them back to another paddock of ours.

When I was 19, I left home and got married. My husband was a jackeroo, so we got a caravan and lived wherever he was working. Then we had kids. Work was short, so he started on the railway line. We moved around a bit and then lived in Marmor which is 40kms south of Rockhampton. Marmor had a few houses and a roadhouse. My husband worked at the salt works, and I worked as a cleaner. We eventually retired into Winton because people knew him here and that meant he was able to get work.

We decided to stay here in Winton because it is a pretty good place. Before we moved into town, I lost my father and then the house we were in burnt down. The people in Winton gave us gifts and money to help get us through. When we got back on our feet I gave some of the money back and told them to keep it for the next person who might need it.

I have something on most days. I'm part of the *60 and Better* program and there

is a variety of things I do, like croquet, scrabble, Yahtzee and gym. Our exercise teacher is 90 and there are some things she can do that I can't. She puts on the music, and I get my jig up.

I also do a lot of craft. I crochet the tops of hand towels and crochet the edges of face washers to sell to tourists. We raise money for local projects, like supporting the residential aged care home and other charities. We also paint messages on stones and crochet worry worms – to encourage people.

The word beautiful is in the eye of the beholder. To me, you got to love yourself before you can love anyone else. If you smile at someone they usually smile back, even if they don't know you. Sometimes a smile can change how you look. A person doesn't have to be beautiful in looks; it can be their personality that makes them beautiful.

I don't think of myself as being beautiful – and I might not be smart, but I am not stupid. I have a go at things. I like to help other people. If you help other people, it can make you feel good.

I would like to say to younger people who don't feel good about their body - love yourself. If you can't love yourself, you can't love anyone else. You've got to learn to be happy in your body. If you are not happy in your body, you are not going to live your life. To start, you got to accept yourself as you are. Don't judge yourself by what other people look like. Someone could look beautiful but be a nasty person.

Beauty comes from within. Be positive. Regardless of how you look. Beauty will then come out from you.



Annette Stuart

Living in Winton is very good. I've been here 62 years. I moved here to work as a nurse at the hospital. It's a safe place to live.

I get waited on hand and foot. I get my housework done, my gardening done and a handyman comes to help with jobs. I do craft activities at the *60 and Better* Program and I do three exercise classes every week.

Beautiful to me is sitting around talking to everyone. When I go downtown on the scooter, I say hello to everyone. I got one of the first scooters in town. It's easy to get around with a scooter. I would be lost without it; there are no taxis here. You can ring the home care people to take you somewhere, but they don't have many drivers.

What makes me beautiful is who I am as a person. Some people might tell you I am a bugger, but that would be their way of joking. They would probably also say I was approachable and get on well with them all. I love mingling with people.

If there was a young person who didn't feel good about their body, I would say to them that it wasn't what they looked like - it was what is inside of them that is important. Who they were as a person is what matters. I say to my grandchildren they have to behave, not back chat their parents, don't take any notice of the bullies and look on the bright side of things.



Loretta Searle

I have been living in Winton all the 80 years of my life. I was born here, and my husband was too. Ageing in Winton is good. I have a lot of friends, and we are never home.

I like to mix with people. If we go out and there are people I don't know, I will go up to them and say hello and ask who they are. It bugs me that I don't know who they are. Sometimes they are tourists. We have a lot of tourists. I think that's nice. Once a week I meet my friends at the bakery for cuppa, and we watch the comings and goings. On Saturdays we have our cuppa at the Matilda Centre because I can't watch the little kids on the pedestrian crossing in front of the bakery, I worry that they are going to get hit by a car.

I see most of my friends every day at the *60 and Better* program. The program has gym, exercises, cardio, line dancing, yoga, morning teas, crafts, croquet, board games, movies and bingo. Sometimes a tourist will come and show us how to do crafts.

We are never home. Sometimes we go to the school and have activities with the kids. Then once a month we go to the aged care place in the hospital and have a cuppa with the residents. Sometimes we just go up to the roadhouse for fish and chips. They have quite good fish and chips.

I think it is so enjoyable ageing in Winton because we still mix with all the age groups, and we know all their family members. If I see school kids, I know their parents and grandparents. I learn something from the kids, and they learn something from me.

I do voluntary work, including meals on wheels. I drive the car, while someone else drops off the meals. They won't let me go into the houses to drop off the meals because I talk too much and so it takes too long. I also help train the new volunteers.

We had the police at one stage helping deliver the meals on wheels. Some of them would do it on their lunch break. It's a way to get to know everyone in town. Not that old people need the police that much, we don't have a lot of crime. There are lots of walls in Winton that have murals on them, and they have never been destroyed. The only time there was graffiti is at the skate park and that's alright.

There are a lot of scooters in town. There are a lot of women that didn't drive or don't have a car and so they get a lift with someone. Some people who are too old to drive a car, have a scooter. There are about 30 or so in town, mostly for people over 70. We know who is dangerous on the road.

I'm on the ambulance committee and they loan people a scooter if theirs has to be repaired. They come from Emerald, 370 kms away, to do regular scooter maintenance. But that's a long way to come if a scooter has broken down.

We have good health care here. A lot of people do telehealth and if you need a specialist, you just go to Brisbane or Townsville. A lot of people go to Brisbane because they have children there, they can stay with. The health service gets us there. It's 1300 kms and takes two flights and about three hours.

I don't think beautiful is about appearance. I think it is how you approach life and how you treat other people. When my kids were little, I would say to them, you are no better than anyone else and no one else is any better than you. There were always bullies at the school and I said to the kids not to pick on anyone - treat them as you would want to be treated. I told them, you don't have to bring the kid home for lunch, but you have to show him respect as a human being.

I don't think I am beautiful, but I do like to help people. I like doing volunteer work and people tell me I should be getting paid - but I enjoy helping people. Being helpful is important.

I would say to a young person, don't compare yourself with other people. Everyone is an individual. We all have good points, and we all have bad points too. We don't all have the same capabilities. We are not all excellent in everything, but we all have good points. Find your good points. You mightn't think what you have is special, but other people will. You will have something other people don't. Just look at your good points. Everyone has got 'em.

It's not about what you look like. It is about your actions. Your actions speak loud. Helping other people is a positive thing.



Sash Whitehead

In 1963 I flew to Longreach from Brisbane as a governess to teach correspondence lessons for two children at Upshot station. The correspondence papers came in an A4 brown envelope, they were stapled in the middle and then folded over, book form. The work was there to follow and complete by the students with my help.

In 1965 I was a governess on Daintree Station, out from Winton, teaching three girls. My husband-to-be was best mates with the owner of the property. We were married after the school year finished.

Mentone Station, Corfield was 110 kms from Winton and my home for the next 53 years. We had three children, Robyn, Jacqueline and John. I was busy cooking big meals for staff, visitors and us.

There were 16,000 merino wool sheep, and I was the cook for shearing and crutching times and having three children as well. Wool went down in price, so they were sold, and we went to Santa Gertrudis cattle. Meat was on the menu three meals a day. The children were on correspondence lessons, and I taught them till the time came for boarding school.

Mentone was a small holding, but over the years we were able to buy additional areas, and my son John and his wife Philippa took over ownership and bought the neighbours property increasing to 88,000 acres. We stayed on and my husband Sandy was John's advisor.

Sandy wasn't well in August 2016 and went into care at Winton hospital, which was 110 kms away and all dirt road. I moved into the Diamantina Gardens outside the hospital soon afterwards so I could visit him each day. Sandy passed away in 2018.

My eldest daughter sent me an email recently for me to test for ADHD. The result that was five out of six – a positive result for ADHD. Now I can look back on my school days up to the present and understand why I was not handling the schoolwork and many other things. I have known for years to be dyslexic.

Life of the wives on properties was pretty hard. I loved it all, but some women who came back from the city could just not handle the harshness of the isolation, eventually moving back to the bright lights of the cities.

We would go to town about every four weeks to get fresh food and the essentials (chemist-dentist-doctors maybe). It took two hours because the roads were all dirt then and 4-wheel drives did not come in till end of the 1960s. Flat tyres didn't happen very often, but when they did - we just changed it.

It was hard when the babies arrived. Life went on, and there was no help. We just had to get on with it. I had no mum or auntie to help, as they were in Brisbane. Station hands and ourselves needed the big meat meals and babies needed attention as well. We had party lines and it was a big expense to ring my family in Brisbane. It was a challenge, but I loved it, and I enjoyed the lifestyle.

Most of our vegetables and fruit and equipment came by train to Corfield on a Sunday. We lived 25 kms from Corfield and would go to meet the train and catch up with locals at the pub, which was the only place in Corfield to meet.

People on properties just keep on working - age does not come into it. But if people are sick or not able to work anymore, which doesn't seem to happen much, some buy a house in town and move to let the younger generations take over the running of the property.

Most women worked beside their husband with whatever job it was. The women here have had to be tough to do fencing, branding and mustering. we would also have to get the burr out of the sheep's wool, it gets stuck in the wool. The burr seeds get stuck in the wool, so we had to eradicate it by spraying or pulling it out. We had to do heavy work. Sometimes we had to pull sheep or cattle out of dried-up dams, on very hot days they would perish.

In draught times the dams would end up with just mud and pools of undrinkable water, then the sheep and cattle would get bogged trying to get a drink. We had to check the waters early in the morning and late in the afternoon and somehow use the tractor or a vehicle to haul the animals out of the mud. When they were stuck, they were stuck, and the vehicle had to help pull them out.

Most of the heavy work was done in the morning or later afternoon, especially in the summer, as it was too hot to go working outside in 50°. The babies and kids came with us, and they just had to put up with the situation.

On the property, people just kept on working until they couldn't help any more. Some stayed on the property and others went to retire. Toowoomba was a favourite place. Now I spend the Summer at Crow's Nest, 48km from Toowoomba. It's a jolly good life and I miss it terribly.

My husband was fencing at 90yrs. He would be miles away from the homestead. He also fire ploughed - that's pulling a machine behind a tractor to take the rough out of our internal dirt roads.

People have to be strong to put up with the life on the land - as we see death, sadness and accidents causing deaths to our loved ones. It's a very harsh life, but there are lots of goodness to enjoy. We just make the most of it and those that do not - leave.

I am strong because I have had to be strong. I don't feel 80. I don't feel I should be weak and useless because of my age.

When I moved into Winton, I found it very convenient. We have the *60s and Better* Program for the older generation just across the lane and their exercises are conducted by Stephanie Greenwood, who is now 90 years old. She takes the classes for an hour. We have Japanese yoga, croquet, scrabble, handywork - games for everyone. They also have smoko (morning tea), which is a great draw card.

I think beautiful is the wrong word. If you have a good heart and you go out of your way to help people - you are a beautiful person. Not all people are beautiful. Some people don't think of anyone other than themselves. Manners are important. I suggest people look in the mirror and say, I love myself. Once you can do that - you can love other people. You can't love other people until you love yourself.

I go out of my way to help other people. There is a little streak sometimes that gives me the shits, some people bug me. Some people don't consider others. But I can look in the mirror and tell myself I am a good person. I put love out there to all my friends and relations.

Beautiful people are the ones that have a good heart and go out of their way to help others and be kind and share things. But others just walk over you and think nothing of it. They are bullies and go-getter no hearts and miserable people.

Young people are today having it tough with technology and mobile phones, which have them by the short and curly. There are also ads on TV that tell them to enhance their bodies. There are food ads that are disgusting. People get sold on ads. My message to young people is to look in the mirror and say to your reflection, I love myself unconditionally. If this is hard to do, keep doing it. You'll get the hang of it.



Margaret Gillies

I was born and bred in Winton. It always was a great place. The kids don't get into any trouble, because if they do someone would see them and tell their parents. That would be the end of that. I lived a good life in the country. I never wanted to live anywhere else. I've been everywhere and done most of what I wanted to do.

I worked most of my life in the drapery shop. Then on Saturday afternoons I worked at the TAB and Sundays at the golf club. That's what you did in those days to save up money. I wanted money so I could go on lovely holidays.

I started working at the drapery shop when I was 13 years old. I started during the school holidays and then they moved me into the office. I was jack of all trades. My boss owned the shop, and she worked there till she was in her nineties. Even when she moved into the nursing home, I would go and pick her up and bring her to the shop to help. She loved being in the shop, and she loved the main street. I became the daughter she never had.

I made my debut when I was 16 and I got a dress from Franke Stuart in Melbourne. The old girls made me a starched petticoat and then there was another petticoat, and I had to walk to the ball because I couldn't fit in the car. They used curtain wire to stiffen the petticoat.

Winton is a well-dressed town. People are well groomed and there has always been a lot of pride in town. Mum used to say you never walk out the door without lipstick and your hair done. Cancer cut off half her face, but she still would put on the lippy.

When the drought came out here, there was no work and no money coming in the property and so a lot of people had to live on credit. After the drought it never seemed to pick up like it used to be. There are no shops here now. We used to have a dress shop that was high class, but it didn't last because she would have three of a kind; why would you do that in a small town?

I have a little car, and I didn't get a license till I was fifty, because I didn't need it. I had to get one when mum and dad were going downhill and I needed to take them to appointments. When I was younger, I used to drive my friend's home when they were drunk, but I didn't have a license.

I went to work for St Vincent de Paul for 15 years when I left the drapery. They had a shop where they sold second hand clothes and gave handouts to people who were in difficult times. They gave people life. I had to finish at 78, I wanted 'me' time. I would be still working there if my knee was alright. A bit of work keeps you going. If you just sit at home, you feel sorry for yourself.

I love older people. In today's world some only want their old people for what they can get out of them. They won't get anything out of me; I've spent it all. I am the spinster of the parish. I'm fussy. I say it pays to be. I am a good catholic girl; I was brought up strict catholic.

Years ago, you respected your uncles and aunties. My dad's mum used to put on a roast for her family on Sunday and there was always barley water on the stove for the babies. She used to make a rainbow cake in a half cut off kerosene tin. You couldn't buy cake tins. Ours was a big family, mum had nine kids, and we all hung out together. I have a lot of nieces and nephews, and I look forward to seeing what they do with their life.

Old people are having a good time here. There is a lot for us to do. I haven't been able to go walking or do the things I used to be able to do, because of my knees. My niece is my right-hand woman, but I am still independent. When people do things for you - you can become lazy.

I have this problem that I don't think I am old. I still put makeup on. I put lippy on to go and get the mail. You can be old if you want to be old. I think being old is when you don't participate in things, you don't think about your appearance. I get my hair done once a week. Old is when people throw the towel in and say, I'm old and can't be bothered. Some old people don't do anything, and some want to go to everything. My brain doesn't feel old.

We need to get our old people's place up and running. They have started building the residential aged care place and they have an *Ageing in the Outback* strategy. It is badly needed. The hospital only has six beds for older people. If I lose it, I would have to go to Longreach because there is no lock up here. Some old people have to go to Longreach to die. They don't want to do that. I don't want to be anywhere else. To get visitors they would have to travel 110 miles one way, and it costs a lot of money.

I want to die doing something in the yard. I would rather die doing something than die in my sleep. Dad was lucky, he got crook and then the priest come and then he died the next day. Mum died when I was in Brisbane for surgery, the last thing I said to her before I left for Brisbane was, don't turn your toes up because I'm having an operation and won't be able to come back. But she did. She waited till I was gone and then she died. She never did anything I told her.

I think beautiful is the weather. I never think someone is beautiful, unless it's a baby. I love beautiful weather. When you asked me what makes me beautiful – you stumped me, and I've never been short of a word in my life. I have always taken pride in my appearance. I always take care of my clothes and makeup. I have been extravagant with clothes all my life. I love beautiful clothes. I used to do the buying when I was working in the drapery shop, and I could get them cheaper.

Looking good was important because I worked in the shop. I never said beautiful, but I liked beautiful clothes. Putting on lippy was something I got from my mother. I still put it on. I never have dry lips. Even if I've to go out to buy bones for the dog, I put on lippy and do my hair. I still feel good about doing that. The only thing I don't feel good about is my knee.

To young people who don't feel good about their bodies, I understand because I've never been happy with my body either. When I was at school there was bullying and I felt like I was a huge, fat person because the other girls told me I was. I thought I was, but when I look back at the photos now, I see that I wasn't. I wasn't huge and fat, but I felt I was because they told me I was.

Everyone is beautiful. Don't worry about what others think. It matters what **you** think of yourself. You got to have pride in yourself. Don't take notice of what other people think. I had five brothers, and they could be harsh, but I didn't take notice. Keep your own counsel. If you are good enough for yourself that's enough. Life is what you make it. Don't put anything off, you got to live every day.



Bob Ivers



June Ivers



Bev Taylor

Project overview

This section of the resource provides an overview of the Winton project, including the project aims, participants, activities and evaluation – and key insights on ageism.

Aims

The aim of the project is to help combat ageism and elder abuse in Winton, through the following activities:

- facilitating a workshop for older people to build their knowledge of internalised ageism, their rights, support services and how to protect themselves from ageism and elder abuse
- sharing photo portraits of older people and their messages about what makes them beautiful as older people - to help raise awareness of ageism, build intergenerational connections and promote respect for older people.

Participants

A call for project participants was disseminated by ADA Australia and Western Queensland Primary Health Network (WQPHN). People who expressed interest in attending were provided with an information sheet and required to return a signed consent form before participating. Twelve people participated in the project, with an average age of 75 years.

Activities

A three-hour workshop was facilitated at the WQPHN office in Winton, simultaneously with a photoshoot. The workshop focused on discussing the following questions:

- How would you describe the character of people living in Winton?
- What is it like to age in Winton?
- Do you think ageism is an issue in Winton?
- What does beautiful mean to you?
- What supports are available to older people in Winton doing it tough?
- What body positive message would you like to send to a younger person?

Presentations were also included on older people's rights and local support services, by the Specialist Advisor and the Coordinator of Aged Care for WQPHN and ADA Australia's Link Community Connector and Aged Care Advocate.

Following the workshop, participants were invited to a phone interview to document their stories of ageing and ageism in Winton and their perspectives on what beautiful means to them and what makes them beautiful. Interviewees were also invited to share a message of support to a young person experiencing body dissatisfaction.

Interviews were transcribed and emailed to participants for verification. Three interviewees had no computer access and so were invited to verify their stories over the phone, with the interview notes being read to them, amended and then reread. Three workshop participants declined the invitation to participate in interviews.

Participant's portraits and messages are shared throughout this report, and a series of community launch and exhibition activities are planned to engage the community in reflection on ageing and ageism.

Evaluation

The approach to evaluating Old is Beautiful workshops generally involves post workshop survey/interviews using The Kirkpatrick Model,¹ to rate project relevance, learning and planned behaviour change. However, time constraints meant pre workshop interviews were not possible – and there were limited opportunities to discuss the project with participants until the post workshop interviews.

Evaluation questions covered in post workshop interviews focused on the relevance of the project. Six participants shared their feedback, with most reporting the project was useful, because it raised important conversations that continued after the workshop. One participant noted,

I am sure the other participants got something out of it. They are still talking about it a month later. They found it very helpful. We are still talking about what beautiful means, it's good to talk about it.

Some participants commented on the value of workshop conversations in exploring ageing and ageism collectively. The facilitated workshop provided new opportunities for older Wintonians to express their concerns, as one participant described,

I think it is a useful thing to do. I think it can help to make people feel more confident. Sometimes in the workshop when people were sharing, I didn't know they felt like that. I wish I had known. They need to talk it out. If they speak about how they feel for this project - I think it is a useful thing.

Some participants questioned the wisdom of using the term 'beautiful' as an entry point for exploring ageing and ageism. The value of broadening the definition of the term, to include older people, was also questioned. One participant reported the project was useful, but only for 'older' community members,

If I had to do this myself, I wouldn't do it, but I thought you are going to all this trouble to come up here, I better participate. It helps to put Winton on the map. I don't need it. I'm just about had it, if you're still doing this at 90 let me know – I'll need it then.

The debate and discussion around what beautiful means was an important component of the Winton project. It provided participants with an opportunity to reject ageist notions of beauty as the prerogative of youth – and led to powerful stories about the valuing of self. It would be useful to follow up with participants in another six months to check how community launch events and exhibitions have further shaped conversations about what it means to age in Winton.

In the following section, the significant insights on ageing and ageism in Winton are presented.

¹ <https://www.kirkpatrickpartners.com/the-kirkpatrick-model/>

Insights on ageism

Analysis of workshop and interview data and conversations with key stakeholders identified valuable insights into ageing and ageism in Winton. It is particularly interesting to note the learnings from Winton are significantly different to those from metro workshops – suggesting the experiences of ageing and ageism are influenced by geographical location.

The insights are considered using a Social Ecological Model,² useful for understanding complex social change,³ including in rural settings.⁴ Application of the model involves ageism at different levels of society, including individuals, families, community and services. These levels of societal influence are outlined below and are prefaced with reflections on ageing in Winton.

Ageing in Winton

Workshop participants were invited to identify the Winton character and consider how this influences their experiences of ageing. Wintonians were described as friendly, talkative, fun loving, caring and community minded. The caring nature of Wintonians helped to build community and significant value was placed on people looking out for each other and volunteering to support local businesses, projects and services.

Wintonians were also described as adaptable and resilient – because they had to be. Life could be tough in Winton, with few options other than to ‘see the upside of things’ and ‘just get on with it’. Older people were described as strong, because they had to be. As one participant noted, *I am strong because I have had to be strong. I don't feel 80. I don't feel I should be weak and useless because of my age.*

(Interview, Sash)

Being physically active was viewed as important for healthy ageing. Older people ageing on property were kept busy with fencing, branding, spraying burr and cooking for workers. Those living in Winton had more free time and needed to volunteer for services or participate in community activities to keep busy.

Winton was considered a safe place to live, with one participant describing,

the kids don't get into any trouble, because if they do someone would see them and tell their parents. That would be the end of that. **(Interview, Margaret)**

Participants agreed Wintonians look out for each other and a participant described, *this gives each one of us a sense of security in the knowledge, that someone has our back in times of need.* **(Interview, Ros)** This was considered unique to outback communities, as Raine reflected:

There is a lot of mateship around here, especially the ones our age. Everyone knows everyone's business. When the chips are down, people are there to help you. You wouldn't get that in Brisbane. People just come and help. How nice! If something happens, people straight away are there for you. **(Interview, Raine)**

² <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1059924X.2017.1358971>

³ <https://www.dss.gov.au/ending-violence#toc>

⁴ <https://www.ruralhealthinfo.org/toolkits/health-promotion/2/theories-and-models/ecological>

Older Wintonians had a shared history that connected them and supported their ageing, with one participant describing,

We have history, and that history is known to each other. When we are doing meals on wheels, the new nurses will say the name of the street and the number of a house. We don't know the number, we know whose house it is, who lives in it now and who used to live in it. We have a shared history that connects us. (Workshop participant)

Where hardships were encountered, Wintonians reportedly rallied together, providing an overall sense that Winton was a good place to grow old.

Ageism and community

Being an older person in Winton was reported to be a good thing – with participants reporting few experiences of ageism in town. Wintonians were reported to 'see the person before the age.' This valuing of older people in Winton was attributed, in part, to close intergenerational connections, as the following participants describe

I think it is so enjoyable ageing in Winton because we still mix with all the age groups, and we know all their family members. If I see school kids, I know their parents and grandparents. I learn something from the kids, and they learn something from me. (Interview, Loretta)

Older people of Winton serve alongside others in a voluntary capacity. As members of various committees for events and charities, this blend of ages provides a valuable understanding between generations and develops respect for each other's opinions. All age groups have much to offer each other in wisdom and experience. (Interview, Ros)

The connections between older and younger people, and the reciprocal valuing, means older Wintonians feel they can rely on younger community members for support, as Raine described:

I don't think it's the same in the city. People don't know each other, and they are too frightened to help. The young people here look after you. They can be the wildest young fellows, but they will look out for you. Sometimes when I need some help, I will go into town to find a young fellow to help me. When I see boys at the supermarket, I get them to clean my windscreen because I can't reach across it. They can be wild, but they will help. (Interview, Raine)

The older Wintonians who participated in the project felt valued by their community. This is significant, given global estimates that one in two people are ageist,⁵ and Wintonians are exposed to ageism in popular culture through social media and the internet. It would be useful to explore how Winton culture maintains a valuing of older people and resists the dominant youth centric Western values that drive ageism. This understanding could provide a foundation for strategies to strengthen and protect the valuing of older Wintonians. As well as opportunities for culture change in other contexts.

⁵ <https://www.who.int/teams/social-determinants-of-health/demographic-change-and-healthy-ageing/combating-ageism/global-report-on-ageism>

Ageism and individuals

The valuing of older people by the Winton community appears to have contributed to lower levels of internalised ageism for project participants. Nine older people provided details of their biological and subjective age (the age they feel). The average age was 80 years, and subjective age was 74 years. This six year difference is significantly lower than the Brisbane workshop, where average subjective age was 26 years lower than biological age.

Research suggests that on average we think of ourselves as eight years younger than our biological age.⁶ What this means is contested in the literature. Some researchers suggest a lower subjective age is associated with people feeling happier and more agentic,⁷ or empowered. Other researchers suggest lower subjective age is associated with more age-related discrimination,⁸ disassociation as protection from ageism,⁹ and perceptions of old age as a period of loss.¹⁰

Interviewees in metro workshops across Queensland for the Old is Beautiful project were invited to share their subjective age, and why they feel the age they do. Participants consistently attributed a lower subjective age to feeling good about the age they are, which was referred to as feeling youthful. Feeling good about age was equated with being young, rather than old. Age was viewed as a binary – young as good and old as bad.

The language used to describe ageing matters. Attributing positive qualities to old age is an important step in older people valuing themselves and protecting themselves against ageism. The Old is Beautiful project encourages participants to be agentic, active and happy – and to see this as part of being old.

In Winton the lower biological-subjective age gap should be considered in the context of a community valuing older people. As Raine described,

I'm 78 and I feel 78. I'm good from the waist up. The only problem with me is my legs. I still get up at 5am and do what I need to do. Sometimes I feel 108, but mostly I feel 78. Ageing in Winton is not a bad thing. (Interview, Raine)

The Wintonians who participated in the project were empowered, and aware of the importance of embracing their age, keeping active and contributing to their community, as these participants noted:

Older people need to know it's possible to be in your nineties and still working. They see me and know they can still keep going. We're here doing something, not just sitting around planning our funeral. Keeping mobile is important. ...Ageing in Winton is defined by your own attitude. (Interview, Stephanie)

Loving ourselves as we are and not mourning the loss of our youth is important. The appearance of a person is not as important as what comes from a person's heart. We need to celebrate the wisdom gathered along life's journey and ignore the negativity of others. (Interview, Ros)

6 <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0890406502000427>

7 <https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC9487183/>

8 <https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0119293>

9 <https://psycnet.apa.org/doiLanding?doi=10.1037%2Fa0024887>

10 <https://www.mdpi.com/2076-328X/14/9/742>

The term ‘beautiful’ was contested in ways that prompted reflection on what beautiful meant. Participants challenged narrow definitions of beauty, that often disempower older people. As Raine reflected

In my heart I feel beautiful even if I don't look it. Sometimes I feel like the last rose of summer, but I feel good about myself. I don't care. If I want to go out somewhere, I'll just go. I mix with other people, and it does me the world of good. I grew up having nothing but worked around it. You just can't sit there. You have to help yourself. Some people feel inferior and so they don't go out. You can't let that mindset hold you back.

(Interview, Raine)

This small sample may not reflect the broader experiences of older Wintonians – but it does suggest lower levels of community ageism may contribute to lower internalised ageism in older people. Perhaps there are lessons here for combating ageism in other contexts, particularly larger towns and cities, where the value of older people may be solely determined on their age – rather than the person they are.

Ageism and families

Ageism in families was not raised as an issue in the workshop or individual interviews. However, several people raised concerns about disrespect, violence and abuse in families. This included inheritance impatience and financial abuse by adult children. It also included concerns about family violence triggered by the frustrations of living on the land.

Ageism and services

Participants spoke about local health and human services provided in Winton with high regard. Service providers in general practice, hospital and aged care services were known personally and were reported to be valuing of participants. On the other hand, ageism was reported by older people accessing metro health services.

Another service that was noted in many interviews was the 60 and Better program,¹¹ run by the Winton Shire Council. The activities offered opportunities for older people to connect socially and to improve their health and wellbeing. Most participants who accessed the program, mentioned Stephanie Greenwood, a 90 year old exercise instructor. Stephanie was viewed as a positive ageing role model, who helped expand older Wintonians expectations of their ageing. The phrase ‘you can’t be what you can’t see’ could apply here, with a modification - it’s easier to be what you can see.

¹¹ <https://www.winton.qld.gov.au/60-better-program-1>

Final reflections on the Winton project

The #OldisBeautiful Winton project provided an opportunity to learn about ageing from older people in outback Queensland. The word 'beautiful' was discussed, debated and contested, with a general agreement that beautiful was not what you look like – but who you are as a person, and what you do for your community.

The valuing of older people in this small town provides an opportunity to learn about what works. A community that values its older people may make it easier for its older people to value themselves. This is not to say that ageism is absent from Winton, rather that there is an opportunity to focus on what works – then make it stronger. There are lessons here for Winton, and for all Queenslanders who are concerned with preventing ageism and elder abuse.

Useful information

60 and Better Program, Winton

The *Winton 60 & Better Program* supports older people aged 60 and older, along with First Nations individuals aged 50 and older with activities. Regular activities include exercise, yoga, craft, games, bingo, lunch, morning tea, movies, exercises and internet access. The calendar of events is printed in the Winton Shire Council monthly newsletter. To participate, give us a call or pop in and fill out a membership form.

Location: Bloomfield and Oondoroo Street
between the Diamantina Gardens Units and the Hospital

Office hours: Monday to Thursday 8:00am to 12:30pm and
Friday 8:00am to 12:00pm

Contact: (07) 4657 2695

ADA Australia

Aged and Disability Advocacy Australia (ADA Australia) is a not-for-profit, independent advocacy and information service supporting and improving the wellbeing of older people and people with disability in Queensland. Our services are free, confidential and independent – and include the following:

Aged Care Advocacy & Care finder

- Assist with accessing and getting the most from your aged care services, including help to access support through the care finder program
- Support to express your views and wishes and to work through care related issues with your aged care provider
- Assist you understand aged care provider agreements and costs.

Elder Abuse Advocacy

- Help to address issues of elder abuse in aged care.

Disability Advocacy

- Assist with accessing disability support services, including the NDIS
- Support to work through issues with your service provider, the NDIS or other services
- Assist with disability discrimination and unfair treatment
- Disability advocacy support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Queenslanders with disability.

Community Legal Service

- Help with Enduring Power of Attorney, guardianship and administration matters
- Help to resolve issues with your Attorney/s
- Representation at the Queensland Civil and Administrative Tribunal (QCAT) and the Mental Health Review Tribunal (MHRT)
- Legal support to people with mental health conditions to navigate the justice system
- Seniors Legal and Social Support Service providing access to legal advice across outback Queensland.

Contact details

Phone: Call 1800 700 600 Aged Care Advocacy Line

Hours: 8am – 8pm Mon – Fri | 10am – 4pm Sat

Website: <https://adaaustralia.com.au/>

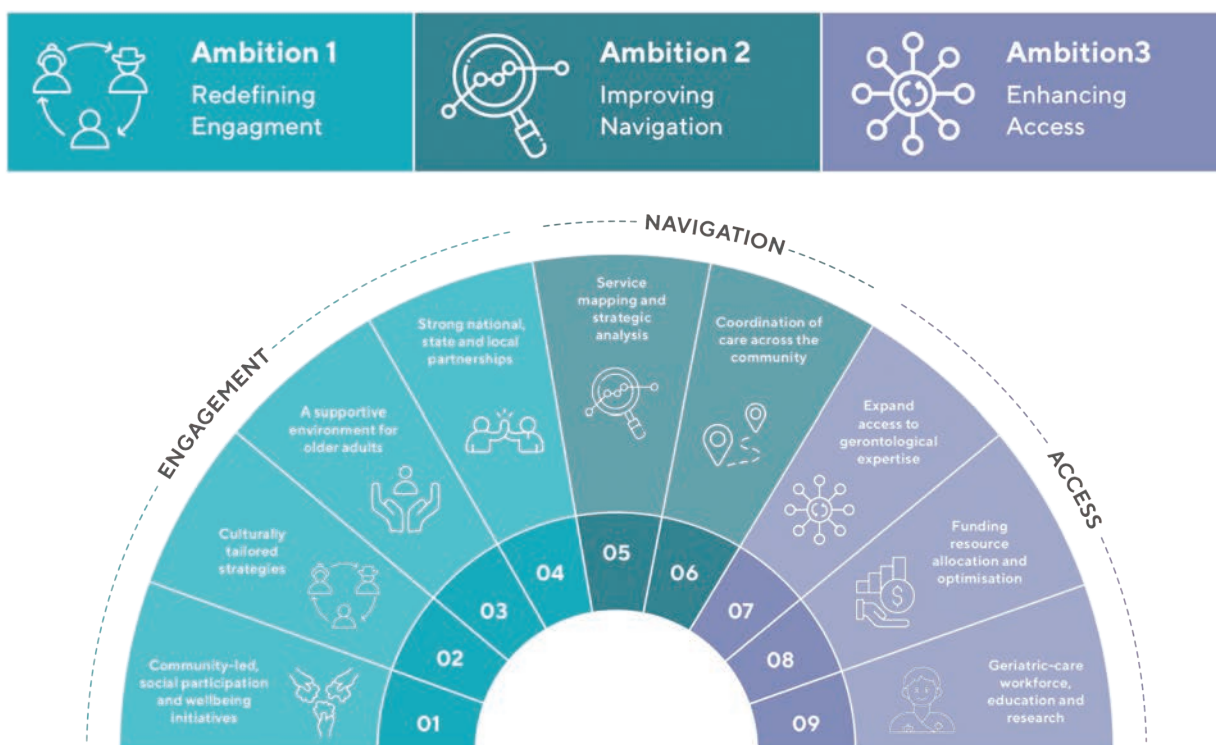


Western Queensland Primary Health Network

The Western Queensland Primary Health Network worked with Specialist Advisor, Sally Fraser, to develop The Ageing in the Outback Strategy™ 2024 – 2026.¹² The Strategy outlines the Network's commitment to the well-being of older people living in Western Queensland.

The Strategy and the Ageing in the Outback™ Preliminary Report 2024 and Ageing in the Outback™ Implementation Plan 2024-2025 are available on the Network's webpage (link in footnote and scroll to corporate documents).

The Strategy has overarching framework of three ambitions which were sub-divided into nine Priority Action Areas. In turn, the Priority Actions Areas were further scoped and developed into a range of 41 Action Items.



One of these Action Items is “to commit to actions and language that address ageism against older people”. The opportunity to work with Celebrate Ageing Ltd and ADA Australia is a practical example of the WQPHN's commitment to older people living in Western Queensland.

¹² <https://www.wqphn.com.au/our-phn/publications-and-reports>



Old is Beautiful is an initiative of Celebrate Ageing Ltd
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<https://www.celebrateageing.com/beautiful.html>